

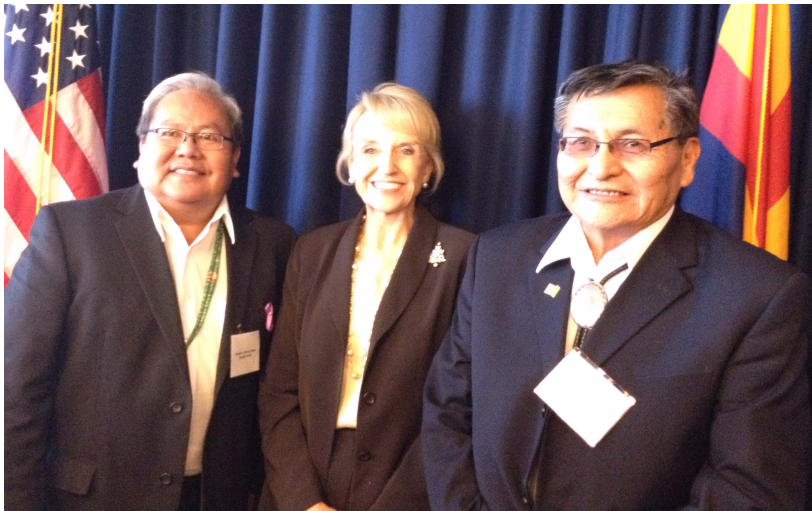


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President Shelly Speaks on Navajo Needs with Arizona Governor

PHOENIX – President Ben Shelly expressed gratitude and asked for support from Gov. Jan Brewer in a Thursday afternoon meeting.



(Left to Right) Speaker Johnny Naize, Gov. Jan Brewer and President Ben Shelly met Thursday afternoon with other Arizona tribal leaders at the Governor's office.

President Shelly was one of 15 tribal leaders who met with Gov. Brewer for more than an hour at the governor's office.

"First of all, thank you for continuing to work with us with Twin Arrows Casino," President Shelly said in his opening statement to Brewer.

He added that he was thankful to Gov. Brewer for meeting with the Navajo Nation and other Indian tribes from Arizona.

The meeting started with the governor's staff assistants giving presentations

about status of the state's budget and overview of the state's education performance.

Rebecca Gau, director of the governor's office of education innovation, presented some recent statistics regarding the educational gap between Native American students and non-Native American students in Arizona.

According to Gaa's power point presentation, about 47 percent of Native American students don't meet the state's reading requirements, while about 75 percent percent of non-Native American students meet the state reading standards.

President Shelly said though the state needs to save revenue, cutting education spending would only allow the achievement gap to persist.

“Future budget cuts to education and health care programs continue to be a concern. Like many families in Arizona, any significant budget cuts will impact our Navajo families,” President Shelly stated.

He cited a one-cent sales tax, which is set to expire in May 2013, could result in more educational cuts.

“My request is put the money back in those cuts,” President Shelly stated.

In addition, the President, also lobbied for the Governor to help ease restrictions for the Big Boquillas Wind Project.

President Shelly said the project needs a permit from the Arizona Game and Fish Department to start construction. The project needs the permit because the wind farm, which is estimated to produce 85 mega-watts of electricity and could power about 20,000 homes, could pose harm to migrating eagles.

However, President Shelly said a revised plan that wouldn’t pose as much of a threat to the eagles was in the works.

“If we can get that permit, we can get that wind farm going,” he said, adding that any project has a delicate balance of building new resources for job growth while ensuring nature is protected.

Navajo Council Speaker Johnny Naize also attended the meeting and said he was thankful for the time to sit with the Governor.

Speaker Naize added that he would like to sit with the Governor to talk about the Transaction Privilege Tax amendment, which could funnel state sales tax money to Indian tribes.

“We would like to sit down and talk with you about it,” Speaker Naize said.

Gov. Brewer also announced that tribes would be exempt from changes to the AHCCCS Medicaid Program.

Gov. Brewer has submitted a proposal to the federal government to cut the program in the state, but also added that tribes would be exempted from any cuts.

“Thank you for that waiver request,” President Shelly said.

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